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Religious Fundamentalism and Death Penalty Attitudes: Towards a New Operationalization of the Constructs

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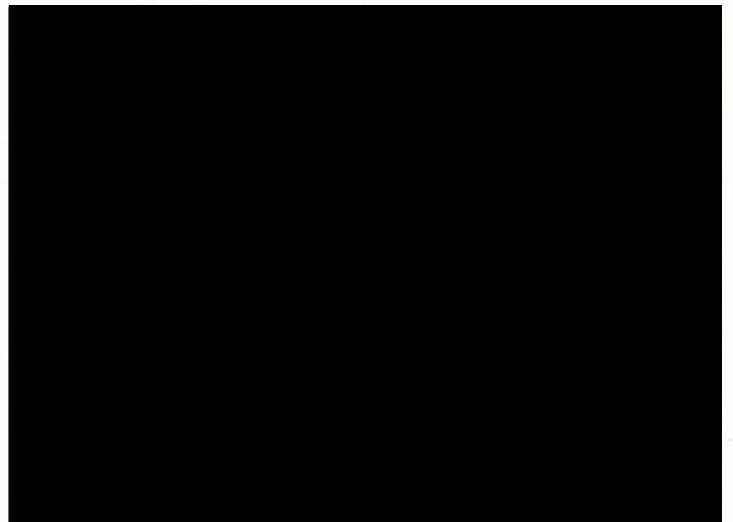
RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND DEATH PENALTY ATTITUDES:
TOWARDS A NEW OPERATIONALIZATION
OF THE CONSTRUCTS

by

William Howard Whited

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND DEATH PENALTY ATTITUDES:

TOWARDS A NEW OPERATIONALIZATION

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The death penalty has remained a highly debated topic in the United States. Due to the link between public support for the death penalty and its utilization as a sanction, it is important to continue investigating the factors related to differences in death penalty support. Religion has a complicated relationship with death penalty attitudes in that certain religiosity factors are associated with support for the sanction while others are linked with opposition. Religious fundamentalism, for instance, is one variable that has been inconsistently associated with death penalty support in the literature. This discrepancy could be due to the poor measurement of the death penalty attitudes and religious fundamentalism, particularly since the standard operationalization strategies of both constructs are often criticized. The present study aimed to re-examine the relationship between the two constructs by using novel operationalization approaches: measuring religious fundamentalism using a psychometrically-sound instrument and further developing and utilizing an existing, but yet un-validated, measure of death penalty attitudes with a sample of male and female college students. Principal factor analysis yielded a five-factor model of death penalty attitudes. After accounting for political conservatism and race, religious fundamentalism did not predict overall level of support for the death penalty, although fundamentalist denominational affiliation was

significantly predictive of level of support for the death penalty. The findings indicate that (1) both religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes are more complicated than previously conceptualized and (2) religious fundamentalism and affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination are differentially related to overall death penalty support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research has consistently shown that public support for the death penalty coincides with its utilization as a sanction in America (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). Additionally, support for the death penalty has been found to hinge on crime rates and fear of crime in general (Lambert, Clarke, & Lambert, 2004; Rankin, 1979). In the US, a majority of individuals (i.e., 65%; Newport, 2009) and states (i.e., 35 states; Death Penalty Information Center, 2010) support the employment of the death penalty as a punishment for murder. Curiously, it seems that the majority of Americans have maintained their backing of the death penalty despite research indicating that it does not effectively deter crimes (e.g., Bailey, 1990) and evidence demonstrating that the cost for the completion of capital punishment exceeds the cost for life imprisonment (Cook & Slawson, 1993; Death Penalty Information Center, 2010; Dieter, 1992). This continued support regardless of the aforementioned shortcomings of capital punishment has served to initiate research attempting to explore death penalty attitudes.

In the measurement of death penalty attitudes, previous research investigating public opinion about capital punishment typically utilizes a single binary question to measure support for the death penalty (e.g., "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"). As explained by Ellsworth and Gross (1994), the usage of this single 'pro/con' question "tell[s] us little about what people think or feel or notice—why they support or oppose capital punishment, what they know about it, how and to whom they believe it should be applied, and how this attitude is related to their behavior or to other attitudes" (p. 21). Instead, to appreciate the complexity underlying one's attitudes towards the death penalty, a multiple-question format is necessary to

facilitate participants' expression of their basis for their death penalty stance and the circumstances in which they may or may not endorse the sanction (Murray, 2003).

The reliance on single-item, dichotomous measures of death penalty attitudes may also over-estimate the level of actual public support for the death penalty. Bowers and Steiner (1998) found that significantly more participants preferred a sanction of life imprisonment without parole in addition to victim restitution than the death penalty, even in areas with high crime rates. It seems that there is a difference between one's *support* for the death penalty and the *preference* of the death penalty over other viable alternatives (e.g., life imprisonment and victim restitution). Niven (2002) suggests that the media's usual adoption of general public opinions towards this issue may inaccurately depict a widespread support for and a belief in the inevitability of the death penalty to the public. In short, it seems that the standard dichotomization of death penalty attitudes provides no context or rationale that offers an accurate, complex depiction of the subject area (Harris, 1986; Murray, 2003; Niven, 2002; Vidmar & Ellsworth, 1974; Wallace, 1989).

When examining the responses to the single-item, dichotomous measure of death penalty attitudes, penologists have identified several important group differences. Regarding race, White participants are more likely to support the death penalty than Black participants (Messner, Baumer, & Rosenfeld, 2006; Young, 1992). When considering gender, some research suggests that males have higher rates of support for the death penalty than females (e.g., Applegate, Cullen, Fisher, & Vander Ven, 2000) although in the literature, the association between gender and death penalty support is inconsistent (Lester, 1998). Furthermore, several studies show that as a group, self-identified political conservatives tend to have greater support for the death penalty than

self-identified liberals (Unnever, Cullen, & Bartkowski, 2006). Although variability in death penalty attitudes has been linked with specific group memberships, such differences are usually seen as “weak predictors” in statistical analyses (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994) and do not permit a complex understanding of what accounts for individual variance in death penalty attitudes.

The complexity of death penalty attitudes has been examined, in part, by exploring the rationales underlying an individual’s attitude towards capital punishment; that is, *why* individuals support or oppose the capital punishment. Since beginning this work in the 1970s (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994), researchers have found that proponents of the death penalty commonly use deterrence (i.e., will prevent others from committing crimes in the future), retribution (i.e., the sanction suits the crime of murder), law and order (i.e., maintains order in society and prevents chaos), and incapacitation (i.e., prevents the criminal from committing further crimes) as rationales to defend their stance (Baker, Lambert, & Jenkins, 2005). Common beliefs among opponents of the death penalty include that the sanction is immoral, does not allow for rehabilitation or mercy, is unfairly administered (e.g., execution of an innocent person, unequal distribution of sanction to minorities or impoverished), and that it lends itself to a brutalization effect (i.e., perpetuates a cycle of violence; Baker et al., 2005).

In addition to these rationales, penologists have found that attitudes towards the death penalty are often based on or linked to religious beliefs. Curiously, both proponents and opponents of capital punishment use religious texts, particularly the Bible, as justification for their positions (Cook & Powell, 2003; Young, 1992). To add to this perplexity, certain elements of religiosity have been linked with death penalty

support, while others have been found to be related to doubts about or an antagonism toward the sanction. For example, variables such as religious salience (i.e., importance of religion to an individual) and an individual's frequency of participation in religious activities (e.g., attending church services) have been linked with oppositional attitudes towards the death penalty (Britt, 1998; Grasmick, Cochran, Bursik, & Kimpel, 1993; Grasmick, Davenport, Chamlin, & Bursik, 1992) while other variables, such as an affiliation with a Christian denomination, have been linked with individuals that support the death penalty (Wozniak & Lewis, 2010).

Of all the religious variables, most research examining death penalty attitudes and religion has investigated what role religious fundamentalism has in defining an individual's level of support for the death penalty (Unnever & Cullen, 2006). Although the majority of studies in the US exploring religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes have been limited to individuals that espouse the Christian faith, religious fundamentalism is typically viewed as a global construct, one which is not religion-specific (Herriot, 2009). Considering the universality of religious fundamentalism amid all religions, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) proposed the following conceptualization of the construct:

The belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and

follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.

(p. 118)

In other words, religious fundamentalists feel threatened by the secularism and modernity of mainstream culture that goes against their religious teachings and they often engage in dichotomous thinking by seeing the world in opposites (e.g., good and evil, truth and falsehood; Herriot, 2009).

The endorsement of these beliefs by fundamentalist denominations has led researchers to hypothesize that religious fundamentalists possess a belief system that encourages them to be more supportive of capital punishment than those from a more moderate or liberal religious orientation. For example, scholars point to several Christian fundamentalist religious beliefs that seem to align well with the utilization of the death penalty for murder, including their (1) harsh and hierarchical view of God as a punitive deity (Unnever & Cullen, 2006), (2) assumption that the scriptures should be literally interpreted (Unnever & Cullen, 2006), and (3) belief that criminal behavior is chosen by the perpetrators and is sinful (Curry, 1996). Collectively, it seems that fundamentalists believe that murders choose to act sinfully and should be punished harshly according to the scriptures, as required by a punitive God, thereby providing a theoretical basis for the relationship between religious fundamentalism and death penalty support.

Although a theoretical link has been constructed between religious fundamentalism and support for capital punishment, the literature has not demonstrated conclusive empirical backing for this relationship. A number of studies investigating death penalty support among Christians have indicated that affiliation to a fundamentalist denomination positively predicted death penalty support (Britt, 1998; Grasmick et al.,

1993; Unnever et al., 2006; Young, 1992). Scholars have also found a relationship between fundamentalist denominational affiliation and death penalty support after controlling for covariates, such as race (Britt, 1998; Unnever & Cullen, 2007; Young, 1992) and political conservatism (Britt, 1998). However, several other investigations have failed to demonstrate any relationship between the two constructs (Baumer, Messner, & Rosenfeld, 2003; Cochran, Boots, & Heide, 2003; Messner et al., 2006; Sandys & McGarrell, 1997; Unnever & Cullen, 2005, 2006; Unnever, Cullen, & Fisher, 2007).

Besides operationalizing religious fundamentalism by using denominational affiliation, other scholars have used the measurement of specific religious fundamentalist beliefs (e.g., belief that God supports or requires the death penalty for murderers) or practices (e.g., literal interpretation of Biblical passages) as well as participant self-identification as a religious fundamentalist in its operationalization. These studies also show mixed empirical results. For instance, the literal interpretation of Biblical passages has been found to predict death penalty support in some studies (e.g., Miller & Hayward, 2008; Young, 1992) but not in other investigations (e.g., Applegate et al., 2000). Also, Unnever and Cullen (2006) found that possessing a view of God as harsh or punitive positively predicted death penalty support, yet other researchers have not identified a significant relationship between the two (e.g., Applegate et al., 2000; Evans & Adams, 2003).

Finally, Miller and Hayward (2008) utilized a six-item measure developed by Putney and Middleton (1961) as a method of operationalizing religious fundamentalism. The scale developers considered it to be a measure of orthodoxy, which they

conceptualized as “the degree of ‘fundamentalism’” of a religious belief (p. 286). Each of the six items on the scale represented one religious belief (e.g., “I believe that there is a physical Hell where men are punished after death for the sins of their lives;” p. 286). Information was not provided regarding the psychometric properties of the scale by the developers, although Miller and Hayward (2008) reported internal consistency levels of $\alpha = .64$. So, even though Miller and Hayward found that religious fundamentalism predicted participants’ support for the death penalty in a juror decision scenario, the age and lack of strong psychometric properties of the measure that was utilized calls into question the findings of the study and the usage of this brief measure as an accurate operationalization of fundamentalism.

In short, the extant literature regarding the association between support for the death penalty and religious fundamentalism, regardless of how it is operationalized, is empirically inconsistent and is therefore inconclusive. Several scholars have taken note of this issue and have proposed explanations for the discrepancy. For instance, Unnever and Cullen (2006) suggested that religious fundamentalism is a complex construct that contains both characteristics that promote death penalty support attitudes (e.g., having a harsh view of God as being punitive, interpreting Biblical scriptures literally) and characteristics that sponsor death penalty opposition attitudes (e.g., compassion, forgiveness).

Other researchers have supposed that this inconsistency may be attributable to measurement error in the form of an incomplete operationalization of religious fundamentalism. The construct of religious fundamentalism has been operationalized in many different ways, with the majority of studies, including those that examined religious

fundamentalism in the context of death penalty attitudes, utilizing Smith's (1990) FUND classification system for Christian denominations. Using a variety of techniques (e.g., examining prior classification schemes, surveying denominational clergy, examining theological doctrine of denominations), Smith placed over 140 known Christian denominations into four distinct typologies (i.e., Fundamentalist, Moderate, Liberal, and Exclusion/Don't Know). To operationalize religious fundamentalism, most death penalty researchers label those self-reported affiliates of a Fundamentalist denomination as religious fundamentalists. Of course, one issue with this method is that not all members of a fundamentalist denomination are necessarily fundamentalist; likewise, some affiliates of a non-fundamentalist denomination may hold fundamentalist beliefs. Additionally, religiosity researchers have consistently labeled denominational affiliation as an inadequate measure to encompass the complexity of a religiosity construct (e.g., Fulton, 1997; Gorsuch, 1998). These factors may explain, at least in part, the aforementioned inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between death penalty attitudes and religious fundamentalism.

Purpose of the Study

Due to the inconsistencies noted in the extant literature regarding the relationship between death penalty attitudes and religious fundamentalism, this relationship requires further exploration. It seems that the common operationalization strategies of both variables are inadequate methods for capturing the complexity of their respective constructs. By utilizing measurement approaches that emerge from a richer conceptualization of both death penalty attitudes and religious fundamentalism, it is hoped that the connection between the two variables will be clearer.

Therefore, in the present study both primary constructs (i.e., religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes) were operationalized using strategies that account for their complexity. Unfortunately, when examining measurement strategies for death penalty attitudes, there are no existing instruments with strong psychometric properties. As such, the purpose of the current study, in part, became to evaluate the psychometric properties (i.e., factor structure, reliability) of an existing instrument designed to measure death penalty attitudes. Regarding religious fundamentalism, due to previous studies' utilization of frequently criticized and in-validated measurement strategies (e.g., denominational affiliation, single religious beliefs, and simple un-validated measures) the current study used a psychometrically-sound instrument to measure religious fundamentalist beliefs. Since, as previously mentioned, political conservatism and race seem to consistently account for some variability in death penalty attitudes (e.g., Messner et al., 2006; Unnever et al., 2006; Young, 1992), they were entered into the analyses as control variables to more clearly distinguish the influence of religious fundamentalism on attitudes towards the death penalty, above and beyond the effects of these variables.

Research Questions

Four primary questions were evaluated in this study:

1. Are death penalty attitudes a unitary construct?
2. Does affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination positively predict attitudes towards the death penalty?
3. Does religious fundamentalism positively predict attitudes towards the death penalty?

4. Is religious fundamentalism a better predictor for attitudes towards the death penalty than the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Four hundred and eighty adult male and female college students participated in this study. Those participating in the study came from a pool of students attending the University of Southern Mississippi earning research credits for psychology courses. Of this sample, one hundred and sixty nine participants (35.2%) were deleted from the study after failing to correctly answer all three items designed to assess random responding or inattention (i.e., "Select 'strongly agree' for this item). Of the final sample, the participants were predominantly female (79.7%, $N = 248$) rather than male (19.3%, $N = 60$). Sixty-three percent of participants were Caucasian/White ($N = 197$), 30.9% were African American/Black ($N = 96$), and 5.2% identified as belonging to another ethnicity (e.g., Native American, Asian, Hispanic; $N = 16$). The median age of the participants was 19 years (range 18-51). Forty-five percent identified as being in their freshman year in college ($N = 141$), followed by Sophomores (21.5%, $N = 67$), Juniors (16.1%, $N = 50$), Seniors (15.8%, $N = 49$), and "Other" (.6%, $N = 2$).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic form solicited basic information from participants (e.g., age, gender, race, education level) and inquired about general information regarding their religious behaviors and attitudes towards the correctional system and the death penalty.

Attitudes towards the Death Penalty Scale

The Attitudes towards the Death Penalty Scale (ATDP; Hingula, & Wrightsman, 2002) was utilized to measure each participant's level of support for the death penalty. The ATDP is a 23-item measure in which participants are asked to score each item from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Total scores can range from 23 to 115, with higher scores demonstrating more death penalty support. When originally developed, the ATDP was not assessed for either reliability or validity. However, subsequent studies have demonstrated adequate internal consistency values of $\alpha = .85$ (Bloechl, Vitacco, Neumann, & Erickson, 2007) and $\alpha = .88$ (Mandracchia, Shaw, & Morgan, 2013). Internal consistency values of the ATDP for the present study were $\alpha = .85$ for the original 23-item version, and $\alpha = .81$ for the simplified, 16-item version of the ATDP that resulted from the below-described exploratory factor analysis, which was used in the primary analysis.

The Conservatism-Liberalism Scale

The Conservatism-Liberalism Scale (CLS; McClosky & Bann, 1979) is a 26-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure the extent of one's adherence to conservative political attitudes. Higher scores reflect a greater level of adherence to mainstream conservative political attitudes. Participants are given three possible responses for each item, one which reflects a liberal political viewpoint, one *neither/undecided* response option, and one which reflects a conservative political viewpoint. For example, one item is "In making changes in our society or government, it's usually better to be guided by (choose one): 'a plan that tries out new ideas,' 'the practical experience of the past,' or 'neither/undecided.'" Due to criticisms (e.g., Owens,

1979) of its shorter, original version (i.e., Classical Conservatism Scale; McClosky, 1958), it was revised to be a more comprehensive measure of attitudes on the liberalism-conservatism continuum. McClosky and Bann (1979) found support for convergent validity as the revised measure was significantly correlated with the self-identified political conservatism of mass public and political groups as well as reported presidential voting. When reviewing the scale, Knight (1999) suggested that the scale has “substantial utility as a broader measure of liberalism-conservatism” (p. 120). Reliability information about the CLS has not been published, although the current study demonstrated internal consistency of $\alpha = .80$.

The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale

The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (RRF Scale; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004) was used to operationalize religious fundamentalism. This measure adheres to the aforementioned conceptualization of religious fundamentalism by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992). Contrary to other measures of religious fundamentalism, the 12-item RRF Scale is free of any specific religion’s doctrinal content and is therefore useful for measuring the construct in persons from all types of religious backgrounds (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). Test takers can choose between nine responses for each item, ranging from “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree.” Total scores range from 12 to 108, with higher scores indicating higher levels of religious fundamentalism. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in the standardization sample ($\alpha = .91-.92$; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004) and subsequent research using the instrument ($\alpha = .94$; Hathcoat & Barnes, 2010). Internal consistency for the current study was also excellent ($\alpha = .94$). Support has also been found for

construct validity and concurrent validity (e.g., strong positive correlation with measures for right-wing authoritarianism, belief in creation science, religious ethnocentrism, and dogmatism; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004).

Procedure

Participants were enlisted via an online research system through the Department of Psychology, Sona Systems, Ltd. Each participant completed an informed consent page (see Appendix A), demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C), and all remaining instruments (see Appendix C) through PsychSurveys (<http://www.psychsurveys.org/>). After completion of the consent page, each participant completed the demographic questionnaire by first completing basic demographic questions. To control for priming and order effects, the religious identification and death penalty sections on the demographic questionnaire as well as the RRF Scale, the CLS, and the ATDP were counterbalanced as five separate pages in PsychSurveys. To control for random responding and inattention, three additional items were added to the instruments (two items in the ATDP and one item in the RRF Scale) asking participants to select one particular response (e.g., "select strongly agree for this item").

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Are death penalty attitudes, as measured by the ATDP, a unitary construct?

H₁ In an exploratory factor analysis of the ATDP, death penalty attitudes, as measured by the ATDP, will suggest the construct is best represented by multiple factors.

2. Does the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination positively predict attitudes towards the death penalty?

H₂ When accounting for race and political conservatism, the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination will predict attitudes towards the death penalty, as measured by the ATDP.

3. Does religious fundamentalism positively predict attitudes towards the death penalty?

H₃ When accounting for race and political conservatism, religious fundamentalism, as measured on the RRF Scale, will positively predict attitudes towards the death penalty, as measured by the ATDP.

4. Is religious fundamentalism a better predictor for attitudes towards the death penalty than the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination?

H₄ When accounting for race and political conservatism, religious fundamentalism, as measured on RRF Scale, will be a better predictor for attitudes towards the death penalty, as measured by the ATDP, than the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The analyses of this study served two purposes, including (a) the further development of the ATDP as a measurement for death penalty attitudes by evaluating its factor structure and internal consistency and (b) examining the ability of religious fundamentalism (as measured by the RRF Scale) and fundamentalist denominational affiliation (categorized by the FUND classification system) to predict attitudes towards the death penalty (measured by the ATDP). As the second analysis utilized the ADTP as its dependent variable, it was conducted after the first set of analyses (i.e., the exploratory factor analysis of the ATDP). More specifically, the exploratory factor analysis directly impacted the second analysis as it produced a simplified 16-item ATDP that was used as the dependent variable in the subsequent regression model.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In order to investigate the notion that death penalty attitudes are a multifaceted construct, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the original 23 item ATDP scale ($N = 305$). Specifically, a principal factor analysis was utilized to estimate the underlying factors of the ATDP and an oblique rotation was used based on the assumption that the resultant factors would be related. An initial analysis obtained eigenvalues for each component and obtained a scree plot of those eigenvalues. In the initial analysis, a six-factor model was supported using Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in total explained 41.7% of the variance. The scree plot was somewhat ambiguous, although points of inflexion seemed to support a two, three, or five factor model. A parallel analysis (the comparison of each existing eigenvalue with a randomly generated

eigenvalue with the same characteristics) was also conducted as an additional method of factor extraction; it supported a six-factor model.

Subsequent analyses using identical extraction and rotation methods were conducted constraining the number of factors to six, five, four, three, and two factors. The two-factor model was rejected as it was too simplistic and the factors were not interpretable. The four and six factor models were more complex, yet they were also discarded as they both had factors that were not interpretable. The three and five factor models were the most interpretable. When comparing these two models, the five-factor model explained more total variance (39%) than the three factor model (33.4%) and was more interpretable (e.g., had a more equal spread of items across the factors and more commonalities within the items of each factor). As it was the most interpretable and was supported by the scree plot, the five-factor model was retained. The eigenvalues and explained variance accounted for by the unrotated factors are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Initial Eigenvalues and Explained Variance from a Primary Factor Analysis of the Attitudes Towards the Death Penalty Scale (ATDP)

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	6.107	24.382	24.382
2	2.112	6.476	30.858
3	1.375	3.611	34.469
4	1.223	2.757	37.226

Table 1 (continued).

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative %
5	1.168	2.457	39.683
6	1.035	2.006	41.668

When considering the substantive importance of a factor loading, a minimum factor loading of .32 on the pattern matrix was used as the criteria for an item's inclusion in a factor. This factor loading has been cited by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) as an appropriate minimum factor loading since indicates a meaningful contribution of an item to a factor and it equates to about 10% of shared variance with the other items on the factor. Therefore, items that loaded at or above .32 on more than one factor were deleted. After items that loaded onto multiple factors or did not meet the minimum factor loading requirement were removed, a total of 16 items remained. A final analysis constrained to five factors was conducted using these 16 items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) for the final analysis is classified as "great" (KMO = .838; Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999), indicating that the sample size is large enough to provide a reliable factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(120) = 1301.45$, $p < .001$, indicating that inter-item correlations were large enough for the principal factor analysis. The final five-factor model using the pool of 16 items explained 44.3% of the total variance and supported the study's first hypothesis proposing that death penalty attitudes are a multifaceted construct. Table 2 shows the pattern matrix for the five-factors of the ADTP Scale.

Table 2

Pattern Matrix and Communalities of the Significant Factor Loadings for the Five-Factor Model of the ATDP

Items	Factor					Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	
People on death row are permitted to appeal their sentence too often.	.661					.565
People remain on death row too long.	.444					.338
A judge should have the right to sentence a defendant to death, even if the jury has recommended life in prison.	.409					.382
Those sentenced to life imprisonment often get out on parole.	.363					.141
If there is any doubt about a defendant's guilt, he or she should not be executed.		.573				.394
I am opposed to the execution of women who are pregnant.		.528				.283
If a defendant on death row wants a DNA test of evidence, the state should automatically grant it.		.464				.281
It is wrong to sentence a mentally retarded person to death.		.379				.289
It is necessary to permit the death penalty in order to reduce the murder rate.			-.787			.733

Table 2 (continued).

Items	Factor					Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	
The possibility of being executed serves as a deterrent against committing violent crimes.			-.738			.481
The only way to control some potential crime is to enforce the death penalty.			-.476			.656
No civilized society permits capital punishment.				-.697		.583
Laws permitting the death penalty use violence to punish violence.				-.507		.354
Laws that permit the death penalty devalue the worth of every human life.				-.445		.584
If a woman committed a crime along with a man, and he is sentenced to death, she should be too.					.850	.663
Men and women should be treated equally when the death sentenced is considered.					.454	.388

Note. Factors include, in order: Sentencing Disputes, Sanction Exceptions, Crime Control, Opposition Concerns, and Gender Equality

Each factor was labeled based on the apparent theme of the items that comprised each factor. Factor 1 was labeled Sentencing Disputes and was composed of four items. The items that loaded on this factor were all related to the typical issues involved in death penalty sentencing (e.g., judicial recommendation, appeals, length of time between

sentencing and execution, and life imprisonment). An example item is "A judge should have the right to sentence a defendant to death, even if the jury has recommended life in prison." Factor 2 (Sanction Exceptions) also consisted of four items; these concerned situations or types of defendants that can be exempt from receiving a death penalty sentence or execution (e.g., existence of reasonable doubt, request for DNA test, mentally retarded defendants, pregnant defendants). An example item is "If a defendant on death row wants a DNA test of evidence, the state should automatically grant it."

Factor 3, labeled Crime Control, was comprised of three items that involved the utility of the death penalty as a deterrent for future crimes (e.g., murder, violent crimes) or as a way to maintain law and order. An example item is "The possibility of being executed serves as a deterrent against committing violent crimes." Factor 4 (Opposition Concerns) contained three items, each dealing with rationales death penalty opponents use to justify their stance (e.g., sanction devalues life, brutalization effect, sanction is uncivilized). An example item is "Laws permitting the death penalty use violence to punish violence." Finally, Factor 5 was labeled Gender Equality and contained two items, both suggesting that the utilization of the death penalty should be the same across genders. For example, one item is "If a woman committed a crime along with a man, and he is sentenced to death, she should be too."

Table 3 contains reliability statistics for the original 23-item ATDP, the shortened 16 item ATDP, and the five factors extracted from the measure. The internal consistency coefficient for the shortened, 16-item ADTP was slightly less reliable than the original 23-item measure ($\alpha = .81$ and $\alpha = .84$, respectively). Reliability statistics for each of the factors were fairly low ($\alpha = .58$ to $\alpha = .79$). Given the low internal consistencies of most

of the factors extracted from the measure, only the total score for the shortened, 16-item ATDP was utilized in the subsequent analysis.

Table 3

Internal Consistencies for the ATDP and the Five Factors Extracted

Factor	Label	No. of Items	Internal Consistency (α)
1	Sentencing Disputes	4	.603
2	Sanction Exceptions	4	.580
3	Crime Control	3	.793
4	Opposition Concerns	3	.698
5	Gender Equality	2	.602
	Original ATDP	23	.845
	Shortened ATDP	16	.809

Note. Original ATDP: 23-item Attitudes Towards the Death Penalty Scale; Shortened ATDP: 16-item Attitudes Towards the Death Penalty Scale

Sequential Regression

The second analysis examined the predictive utility of religious fundamentalism and fundamentalist denomination affiliation on death penalty attitudes. Specifically, it was hypothesized that both religious fundamentalism (as measured by the RRF Scale) and affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination (according to the FUND classification system) would predict death penalty attitudes (H1 & H2) and that of the two, religious fundamentalism would be the better predictor (H3). For this analysis, the total score of the shortened 16-item ATDP was utilized as the dependent variable in a sequential linear

regression. The control variables, including political conservatism (measured by the CLS) and race were entered into the first block of the analysis. Race, a categorical variable, was dummy coded to two variables, including White (Constant) vs. Black, and White (Constant) vs. Other Races. The primary predictor variables of religious fundamentalism and fundamentalist denomination affiliation were entered into the second block of the analysis. Reported denominational affiliation was branded into four distinct categories following Smith's (1990) FUND classification system, including Fundamentalist (48.7%, $N = 150$), Moderate (39%, $N = 120$), Liberal (3.6%, $N = 11$), and Exclusion/Unknown (8.8%, $N = 27$). As a categorical variable, denominational affiliation was further recoded into dummy variables (Fundamentalist = 1, Other = 0) as categorized in previous death penalty research using FUND (e.g., Unnever, Cullen, & Bartkowski, 2006; Young, 1992).

Table 4 shows a bivariate correlation matrix between each continuous variable in the regression analysis.

Table 4

Intercorrelations Among all Continuous Variables ($N = 296$)

Variable	1	2	3
1. ATDP	-		
2. CLS	.334***	-	
3. RRF	.045	.110*	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, ATDP: 16-item Attitudes Towards the Death Penalty Scale; CLS: Conservatism-Liberalism Scale; RRF: Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale

The assumptions (e.g., normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and independent errors) for sequential regression were all met and influence statistics did not significantly skew the data. The omnibus test was significant, $F(5, 592.33) = 9.8, p < .001$, indicating that the model explained a significant portion of the variability in ATDP scores. In total, the model explained 14.4% of the variation in ATDP scores. The first block, comprised of control variables, was significant, $F(3, 294) = 12.28, p < .001$, and explained about 11.2% of the variation in ATDP scores. Of the two variables in the first block, only CLS scores (and not race) was a significant predictor of death penalty attitudes as measured by the ATDP, ($b = .332, t[290] = 5.35, p < .001$).

The second block was also significant, $F(2, 290) = 5.5, p < .01$, and explained an additional 3.2% of the variation in ATDP scores. Of the variables in the second block, only fundamentalist denominational affiliation (compared to all other affiliations) was a significant predictor of death penalty attitudes as measured by the ATDP, ($b = .21, t[290] = 3.31, p < .01$). These results support the second hypothesis. Religious fundamentalism, as measured by the RRF Scale, was not a significant predictor of ATDP scores. Therefore, the final two hypotheses were not supported. Table 5 reports results of the sequential regression analysis.

Table 5

Predictors of Death Penalty Attitudes as Measured by the ATDP

Variable	R^2	ΔR^2	B	$SE B$	β
Block 1	.112	.112**			
Constant			46.162	.612	

Table 5 (continued).

Variable	R^2	ΔR^2	B	$SE B$	β
CLS_total			.327	.060	.334**
Black Ethnicity			.100	1.113	.006
Other Ethnicity			-.735	2.151	-.019
Block 2	.114	.032*			
Constant			46.628	1.521	
CLS_total			.325	.061	.332**
Black Ethnicity			-1.104	1.206	-.061
Other Ethnicity			-1.423	2.131	-.038
FUND			3.531	1.077	.211*
RRF Scale			-.027	.025	-.066

Note: $N = 298$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$, CLS_total: Total score of the Conservatism-Liberalism Scale, FUND: Fundamentalism denominational affiliation, RRF Scale: Total score of the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was twofold and included an exploratory investigation of the structure of a measure of attitudes towards the death penalty and a re-examination of the relationship between religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes. An exploratory factor analysis was utilized to continue the development of an existing death penalty questionnaire (ATDP), a purpose suited to appreciate the complex and conditional basis upon which death penalty attitudes are conceptualized in the extant literature. The exploratory factor analysis shortened the ATDP to 16 items and the analysis yielded five interpretable factors labeled: Sentencing Disputes, Sanction Exceptions, Crime Control, Opposition Concerns, and Gender Equality, respectively. The shortened ATDP was then used as an outcome variable in an analysis exploring whether the typically utilized and criticized operationalization of religious fundamentalism (affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination) was a stronger predictor than a psychometrically-sound measure of religious fundamentalism (RRF Scale) when accounting for political conservatism and race. The hypothesis that the RRF Scale would be a stronger predictor than fundamentalist affiliation was not supported. Instead, of the two primary variables, only fundamentalist affiliation was a significant predictor of ATDP.

Measuring Death Penalty Attitudes

Most penologists studying trends in public attitudes towards the death penalty employ a single, binary question to measure one's attitudes towards the death penalty (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). The further development of the ATDP was initiated as a

response to the criticisms of adopting such a measurement strategy (e.g., Harris, 1986; Murray, 2003; Niven, 2002; Vidmar & Ellsworth, 1974; Wallace, 1989). A primary factor analysis led to the shortened 16-item ATDP and yielded five factors. The first factor, Sentencing Disputes, referred to sentencing and sentence completion issues that proponents towards the death penalty typically criticize. Individuals scoring high in this factor indicated disapproval with more lenient sentences (e.g., life imprisonment instead of the death penalty) as well as processes (e.g., appeals) that impede on a speedy execution of the convicted. Those scoring high in the second factor, Sanction Exceptions, indicate disagreement with the sentencing of a more lenient sanction for situations or persons typically exempted from receiving the death penalty, such as defendants who are pregnant, mentally retarded, or request a DNA test.

Items in the third factor, Crime Control, concerned the effectiveness of the death penalty for deterring severe crimes and maintaining law and order in society. Individuals scoring high on this factor indicated agreement with the deterrence and law and order rationales used by proponents of capital punishment. Those scoring high on the fourth factor, labeled Oppositional Concerns, demonstrate disagreement with the explanations death penalty opponents use to justify their stance, including the primitiveness of the sanction and the brutalization effect. Finally, high scorers in Gender Equality, the fifth factor, indicate agreement with the notion that death penalty sentencing should be equal between men and women, including during instances when both genders are convicted of the same heinous crime. Overall, the low reliabilities of many of the factors indicates the need for additional item development and unfortunately limits the current interpretive utility of the five-factor model using the 16 items of the ATDP.

Perhaps one reason why death penalty attitudes have typically been measured by a single question is due to its convenience: it is an effortless addition to the large social surveys which are analyzed for much of the literature regarding death penalty attitudes. Further, the usage of this item is important for measuring overall trends in public opinion about the death penalty. Research shows that most individuals know and have strong opinions regarding their general stance on capital punishment (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). Yet, the standard dichotomous measure of death penalty attitudes (e.g., "Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder") does not afford a respondent the opportunity to express a desire for the discretionary application of the death penalty (e.g., only for serial killers, only for pre-meditated murders, only when victims are tortured). Instead, it is drafted in such a way that the self-identified death penalty proponents could also be regarded as proponents for mandatory sentencing (i.e., every convicted defendant of murder of a certain severity is automatically given a death penalty sentence).

Several large-scale social surveys (e.g., Gallup poll, Harris poll) in the 1970s and 1980s asked those polled to choose between mandatory and discretionary sentencing of the death penalty. For all but one exception, those polled overwhelmingly preferred a discretionary death penalty (over 50%) as compared to mandatory sentencing (less than 30%; Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). Interestingly, Ellsworth, and Ross (1983) reported that neither self-identified proponents of mandatory death penalty sentencing nor opponents of the death penalty staunchly adhered to their stances—both groups overall indicated that in some cases, they preferred discretionary privileges for death penalty sentencing. The desire for discretionary privileges by those whose attitudes are at extreme ends of a

punitive spectrum (mandatory death penalty sentencing as well as opposition to any death penalty sentencing) illustrates the complex nature of death penalty attitudes. Overall, this literature highlights the difficulties of making any complex interpretations based on the results of the traditional death penalty question: the non-specific language of the traditional death penalty question hampers the ability to determine if self-identified death penalty supporters are proponents of mandatory or discretionary sentencing.

If further development of the ATDP supports the presently found five-factor model to conceptualize attitudes towards the death penalty, there are some important implications. For example, when comparing it to the commonly utilized dichotomous measure of death penalty attitudes, the five-factor model includes a more multi-faceted assessment of death penalty attitudes and with it, a more complex understanding of an individual's level of support for the death penalty and some of the underlying rationales that they use as a basis for their stance. The operationalization of attitudes towards the death penalty via the five-factor model likely surpasses several of the limitations of the standard, binary item. For example, one critique of the standard approach is that it does not give any indication of *why* a participant has a particular death penalty stance and *if* they believe the death penalty should be applied to all types of defendants (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994). An examination of the factor scores and/or responses to individual items in the five factor model, especially the second, third, fourth, and fifth factors (Sanction Exceptions, Crime Control, Opposition Concerns, and Gender Equality, respectively) provide an indication of the participant's level of agreement with rationales used by proponents and opponents of the death penalty (e.g., deterrence, brutalization effect) in

addition to their opinions about the types of defendants which should be exempt from the sanction.

Another critique of the standard dichotomous question is that it does not present participants with other viable sentencing options for murder (e.g., life imprisonment with victim restitution). When it is presented with other sanctions, the death penalty gathers less support than less punitive sentences (e.g., Bowers & Steiner, 1998). An examination of the first factor, labeled Sentencing Disputes, would afford penologists a clear delineation of a participant's attitudes towards the viability of life imprisonment as well as certain negative characteristics of the death penalty process (e.g., lengthy appeals process, length of stay on death row prior to execution) that may make the capital punishment less preferable. Finally, research shows that when given a series of questions about their level of support for the death penalty, participants gradually indicate less support for the sanction (e.g., Bowers & Steiner, 1998). This seems to suggest that a single item measure of death penalty support does not provide a fair estimation of a participant's true attitude towards the death penalty after considering several different factors. A more detailed model of the death penalty (i.e., five-factor model) could more objectively assess the nature of one's attitudes towards capital punishment after accounting for several relevant circumstances.

Re-Examining Religious Fundamentalism and Death Penalty Attitudes

Similar to death penalty attitudes, the construct of religious fundamentalism has a multi-faceted and complex conceptualization in the literature (see, e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Herriot, 2009). The hypothesis that the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination would have weaker predictive utility for death penalty

attitudes than religious fundamentalism was not supported. These findings could be explained by the different conceptualizations between the two methods of operationalizing religious fundamentalism. The RRF Scale conceptualizes religious fundamentalism as a global construct existing universally amid all religions. Its items were developed specifically to be doctrine-free and therefore relevant to all religions. On the other hand, FUND is a classification system that places denominations in a Christian tradition into their respective fundamentalist, moderate, or liberal categories based on several techniques, including: using prior classification systems, examining membership in specific theological associations, surveying of church members and leaders, and reviewing the theological doctrine of the denomination (Smith, 1990). On a basic level, religious fundamentalism seems to refer to a specific type of religious beliefs while FUND is a broader, denomination-wide measure of organizational doctrine.

The findings could also be due to confounding variables, such as regional religious differences. Previous researchers have suggested that the past inconsistencies in the literature between fundamentalist denominational affiliation and death penalty attitudes could be due to regional influences (e.g., the Bible belt; Applegate et al., 2000; Borg, 1997; Young, 1992; Young & Thompson, 1995) or specific areas embedded with a strong localized moral community (e.g., Oklahoma City; Unnever & Cullen, 2005). Given that these data were collected below the Bible belt, it is not surprising that there was an over-representation of individuals belonging to a fundamentalist denomination or reporting certain fundamentalist beliefs as compared to the broader US population. Specifically, in this sample, about half of the participants (48.2%) identified themselves as belonging to a fundamentalist denomination. This quantity is much larger in

comparison to previous literature indicating that Smith's (1990) FUND classification system places about 30% of the US population within the same fundamentalist category (e.g., Kellstedt, Green, Guth, & Smidt, 1996). This regional over-representation may have limited the variability in total RRF scores and the denominational affiliation provided by the participants, thereby rendering the present data insufficient to appropriately test the predictive ability of religious fundamentalism on death penalty attitudes.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, there seem to be some qualities of religious fundamentalists that likely promote the usage of the death penalty (e.g., view of God as a punitive deity, literal interpretation of scriptures) and qualities that likely sponsor attitudes of death penalty opposition (e.g., compassion, forgiveness; Unnever & Cullen, 2006). Perhaps religious fundamentalism, as measured by the RRF Scale, does not include the characteristics that are associated with death penalty opposition whereas the affiliation with a fundamentalist denomination, a broader and more-encompassing measure, might include those oppositional characteristics. As such, the RRF Scale measurement of religious fundamentalism as a unitary construct may be less appropriate than a view of religious fundamentalism as a multifaceted construct (including punitive and compassionate qualities) in relation to death penalty attitudes.

Finally, the five-factor model yielded in the present study indicates that death penalty attitudes are multifaceted, although in testing the present hypotheses the relationship between religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes was investigated utilizing a conceptualization of death penalty attitudes as a unitary construct (i.e., using the ATDP total score). The re-conceptualization of death penalty attitudes as

a multifaceted construct has important implications. It may be that religious fundamentalism is related to specific aspects of death penalty attitudes in different ways. Additionally, given the previously mentioned research implicating religious fundamentalism as a multifaceted construct (i.e., consisting of some characteristics that are related to death penalty support and some characteristics related to death penalty opposition), it may be that certain aspects of religious fundamentalism are predictive of specific factors of death penalty attitudes. Future research would be useful in identifying these potential relationships.

Although the current study's hypotheses were not all supported, there are several implications one can draw from the findings. Since religious fundamentalism (using the RRF Scale) and fundamentalist denominational affiliation do not yield similar predictive results, one methodological implication of this study seems clear: the construct of religious fundamentalism is different from fundamentalist denominational affiliation, even though religious fundamentalism is often operationalized as fundamentalist affiliation in the literature. There are many problems with using denominational affiliation, specifically Smith's (1990) FUND classification system, as a measure of religious fundamentalism. For example, FUND includes the evangelical Christian community in its fundamentalist category, even though there are large differences in the belief systems and theological doctrines of this community and fundamentalists (Kellstedt et al., 1996; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Although researchers are unclear exactly how to organize a more accurate measurement of Christian fundamentalists in the US, there is agreement that FUND's inclusion of 30% of all Americans as "Christian

fundamentalists” is an inflated and therefore inaccurate representation of a small sect of Christians (e.g., Kellstedt et al., 1996; Woznaik & Lewis, 2010).

FUND has also been criticized due to its pairing of both White and Black denominations in its fundamentalist categorization. Previous research indicates that white affiliates of fundamentalist churches have a very high level of support for the death penalty and churchgoers of black fundamentalist denominations have a very low level of support for the death penalty (see, e.g., Britt, 1998; Woznaik & Lewis, 2010). This indicates that FUND may not even be the best categorization system of Christian denominations, particularly when compared to denominational classification systems that take into account ethnic denominational differences (e.g., RELTRAD; Woznaik & Lewis, 2010). RELTRAD, developed by Steensland and colleagues (2000), is not used as a measure of Christian fundamentalism, although it does differentiate between predominantly White and Black denominations in the US in its five categories (i.e., Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, and Unaffiliated).

Another limitation of FUND as a measurement of religious fundamentalism is that it ignores the potential for disagreement between an individual’s religious beliefs and political opinions and the stances on religious and political topics taken by their respective religious denominations. Interestingly, denominational affiliation accounts for variance in individual churchgoers’ political opinions even after accounting for their particular religious beliefs and behaviors (Brooks & Manza, 2004; Layman, 1997; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006; Olson & Warber, 2008). Research also indicates that churchgoers are aware of and influenced by the political ideas of their religious leaders (Djupe, Olson, & Gilbert, 2005; Olson, 2002). However, those attending church have

political preferences that are often dissimilar to the “official” position of their religious denominations or the spoken preferences of their religious leaders (Hertzke, 1988). Woznaik and Lewis (2010) demonstrated that this disconnection between churchgoers’ and denomination political preferences extends to support of the death penalty. This literature, in addition to the findings of this study, call into question the validity of FUND as an indicator of an individual’s religious fundamentalism. Future death penalty researchers may consider using other measures of religious fundamentalism besides denominational affiliation. Either way, penologists should clearly designate what measurement strategy they used and avoid strictly using the term “religious fundamentalism” when actually measuring denominational affiliation.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations of this study which impact the generalizability of the findings. One obvious limitation is the study’s sampling strategy: data collection by means of convenience using college undergraduate students living in a southern region of the country. It is likely that these results might have differed from a national sample that is representative of the U.S. population. Collecting data from undergraduate college students is an often utilized yet criticized sampling method in psychological research (Gallander Wintre, North, & Sugar, 2001; Sears, 1986). Although the same criticisms are relevant to this study, sampling undergraduate college students about their political attitudes has merit, especially when examining religious beliefs and attitudes towards political matters (e.g., the death penalty). Research indicates that adolescence and young adulthood are important developmental periods for the solidification of identity. It is during identity development when an adolescent or young adult can explore and commit

to political and religious ideologies and other identity domains (e.g., interpersonal, occupational; Marcia, 1966).

Additionally, college students are also taking part in higher education, an important note since education has been found to have an inverse association with death penalty support (Soss, Langbein, & Metelko, 2003; Stack, 2003). Research also indicates that those who have attended college make up a large proportion of the voting public as evidenced by statistics from the 2008 presidential election: over 70% of all college-educated persons voted in the election and 65% of voters attended some college (File & Crissey, 2010). As such, those with some college education are likely to have a larger and more influential political voice, a notion which makes the examination of their political attitudes, including attitudes towards the death penalty, essential. Considering these factors, this study augments the literature by investigating the religious and political beliefs of those with a strong collective political presence transitioning through a crucial identity development period. Future research could investigate what, if any, differences exist between religious fundamentalism and death penalty attitudes for those in different age groups, educational backgrounds, identity stages, and regions of the country.

Another limitation concerns the usage of the ATDP as it does not yet have data to support its validity, including its predictive validity (e.g., ability to predict the decision of a jury member in a death penalty case). While using a measure without any formal validity information is concerning, it was thought that the ATDP would serve as a more detailed, comprehensive, and continuous operationalization strategy for death penalty attitudes than the limited and frequently criticized standard, single-item binary death penalty question.

Additionally, part of the rationale for conducting the exploratory factor analysis of the ATDP was to begin further development of the measure. The analysis of the ATDP yielded a five-factor model, indicating that attitudes towards the death penalty is not a unitary construct but instead includes several sub-components. The complex factor structure found in the ATDP, a brief measure, likely contributed to the low internal consistency values of the individual factors. Kline (1999) noted that while recommended internal consistency ranges between values of $\alpha = .7$ and $\alpha = .8$, scales measuring complex or diverse psychological constructs can realistically drop below a value of $\alpha = .70$. While death penalty attitudes are certainly a complex and multi-faceted construct, it is hoped that after additional development of the ATDP, the factors will exhibit improved internal consistency. Cortina (1993) stated that internal consistency is partially dependent on the number of items in a factor; so, when item quantity increases in a factor, internal consistency typically follows suit. This indicates that the additional item development in factors with low internal consistency would be beneficial for the psychometric properties of the ATDP.

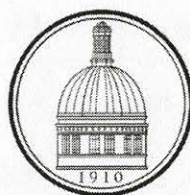
Besides adding items to some subscales of the ATDP, there are additional steps that should be taken prior to its widespread use in death penalty research. Further item development (including the potential revision of deleted items due to poor or double loading) is needed to improve the reliability of the factor structure. A confirmatory factor analysis would also be a helpful future step in the continued development of the measure and could be conducted following further item development and another exploratory factor analysis. Moreover, future development of the ATDP could focus on assessing

and improving its psychometric properties (e.g., test-retest reliability, predictive validity, convergent validity, divergent validity).

As popular support (both actual and perceived) likely influences the sanction's utilization in this country (Ellsworth & Gross, 1994) it is imperative that the measurement of public opinion towards the death penalty is as considerate to the complexity of the construct as possible. Changes in the way variables are measured in the death penalty literature, and subsequently reported to the public, may influence how public support is perceived, which could in turn impact the legislative status of capital punishment in this country.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study entitled:
Religious Fundamentalism and Death Penalty Attitudes: Towards a New
Operationalization of the Constructs

Purpose: This study is being conducted to investigate the relationship between religious variables and attitudes towards the death penalty.

1. Description of Study: You will be asked to complete a series of online questionnaires about your political and religious beliefs as well as your attitudes towards the death penalty.
2. Benefits: You will receive .5 research credit in Sona for the completion of the questionnaires.
3. Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this proposed study. If you feel emotional distress while completing these questionnaires, the University of Southern Mississippi Counseling Center is available and provides psychological services to university students (601-266-4829). There is no penalty for withdrawing from this project at any time.
4. Confidentiality: These questionnaires are intended to be confidential, and your name is requested on this page only for the purpose of assigning research credit. The information you provide will be kept in secure electric locations, to ensure your privacy.
5. Subject's Assurance: Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted), the researchers will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or prejudice. Questions concerning this research should be directed to Will Whited

(William.White@eagles.usm.edu). This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Human Subjects Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-001, (601)-266-6820.

6. Consent to Participate: I consent to participate in this study, and in agreeing to do so, I understand that:
- I must be at least 18 years of age,
 - I am being asked to complete a set of questionnaires, which will take up to 30 minutes and for which I will receive .5 research credits, and
 - All information I provide will be used for research purposes and will be kept confidential.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. If I decide to participate in the study, I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I have read and understand the information stated, am at least 18 years of age, and I willingly sign this consent form. A copy can be printed by clicking on "file" at the top left and choosing "print" from the menu.

(Subject name printed)

(Subject signature)

Date

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
 - The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
 - The selection of subjects is equitable.
 - Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
 - Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
 - Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
 - Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
 - Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
 - If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 12050102

PROJECT TITLE: **Religious Fundamentalism and Death Penalty Attitudes:
Towards a New Operationalization of the Construct**

PROJECT TYPE: Thesis

RESEARCHER/S: Will Whited

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Counseling Psychology

FUNDING AGENCY: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval

PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: 05/01/2012 to 04/30/2013

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

APPENDIX C

MEASURES

Demographic Information

Please check or circle the response or fill in the blank where appropriate

1. How old are you (in years)? ____
2. What is your gender? (circle one) M F Other
3. Which racial or ethnic group do you identify with?
 - a. _____ African American/Black
 - b. _____ American Indian/Native American
 - c. _____ Asian/Asian American
 - d. _____ Caucasian
 - e. _____ Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - f. _____ Biracial/Multiracial (Explain) _____
 - g. _____ Other (Explain) _____
4. How are you currently classified here at the University of Southern Mississippi?
 - a. _____ Freshman
 - b. _____ Sophomore
 - c. _____ Junior
 - d. _____ Senior
 - e. _____ Other (Explain): _____
5. What is the total number of years you have been in school (kindergarten through present)? ____
6. Have you ever been charged with a crime? Yes No
 - a. If yes, please list the crime(s) you have been charged with.

7. Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes No
 - a. If yes, please list the crime(s) you have been convicted of.

8. Have you ever been sentenced to time in jail or prison for a crime?

- a. If yes, please list the type of crime(s) you were incarcerated for.
 - b. How long were you incarcerated for (total for all crimes)?
9. Generally speaking, do your political beliefs tend to be more conservative, moderate, or liberal? Assign a numerical value to signify your level of political conservatism, with lower numbers meaning **extremely liberal**, middle numbers meaning **moderate**, and higher numbers meaning **extremely conservative**.

0	50	100
Extremely Liberal	Moderate	Extremely Conservative

10. Generally speaking, do your primary caregiver(s) (e.g., mom, dad, grandparents, aunt) political beliefs tend to be more conservative, moderate, or liberal? Assign a numerical value to signify your level of political conservatism, with lower numbers meaning **extremely liberal**, middle numbers meaning **moderate**, and higher numbers meaning **extremely conservative** or if you don't know, check **I don't know**.

0	50	100
Extremely Liberal	Moderate	Extremely Conservative

_____ I don't know

11. Generally speaking, does your significant other's (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife, partner) political beliefs tend to be more conservative, moderate, or liberal? Assign a numerical value to signify your level of political conservatism, with lower numbers meaning **extremely liberal**, middle numbers meaning **moderate**, and higher numbers meaning **extremely conservative** or if you don't know or are current single, check **I don't know or I'm currently single**.

0	50	100
Extremely Liberal	Moderate	Extremely Conservative

_____ I don't know or I'm currently single

12. To the best of your ability, please estimate your total household income (include parent's income if you are still dependent on them for financial support). _____

Religious Identification Questions

1. What is your spiritual/religious identification or denomination? Please check one.

A.) Agnostic	N.) National Baptist Convention, Unincorporated
B.) Atheist	O) Progressive National Baptist Convention
C.) Buddhist	P) Church of God in Christ
D) Catholic	Q) LDS - Mormon
E) Lutheran	R) Hindu
F) Methodist	S) Muslim/Islam
G) Southern Baptist	T) African Methodist Episcopal
H) Missionary Baptist	U) African Methodist/Episcopal Zion
I) Jewish	V) Christian Methodist Episcopal
J) Taoist	W) Unitarian-Universalist
K) Presbyterian	X) Nondenominational
L) Pagan/Wiccan	Y) None
M.) National Baptist Convention, Incorporated	Z) Other: _____

2. In the past year, about how often do you attend church or a religious meeting?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| a. More than once a week | f. Very rarely, or only on religious holidays (e.g., Christmas, Easter) |
| b. Once a week | g. Never attended |
| c. Two or three times per month | |
| d. Once per month | |
| e. Once every few months | |

3. Think about your attendance at church or other religious meetings *before you began college*. In the year in which you went to church or religious meetings/activities *the most*, about how often did you attend?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| a. More than once a week | f. Very rarely, or only on religious holidays (e.g., Christmas, Easter) |
| b. Once a week | g. Never attended |
| c. Two or three times per month | |
| d. Once per month | |
| e. Once every few months | |

4. If applicable, to the best of your ability, please estimate the total amount of time (in years) you were or have been a member of a religious body or church. _____

Death Penalty Questions

1. Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the death penalty *for persons convicted of murder*?
 - a. Strongly Approve (*if so, answer questions 2 & 3*)
 - b. Approve (*if so, answer questions 2 & 3*)
 - c. Unsure (*if so, skip to question 4*)
 - d. Disapprove (*if so, skip to question 5*)
 - e. Strongly Disapprove (*if so, skip to question 5*)

2. If you chose "strongly approve" or "approve" for question 1, think about your reasoning behind your approval of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder. Compare your reasoning with the options from the list below and choose the option that best describes your *top rationale* for your support of the death penalty. If none of the options matches your reasoning, select "other" and give a brief description of your rationale.
 - a. The death penalty prevents others from committing similar crimes in the future.
 - b. The death penalty fits the crime (i.e., "eye for an eye")
 - c. The death penalty maintains order in society and prevents chaos
 - d. The death penalty permanently prevents the criminal from committing further crimes
 - e. The death penalty is cheaper than incarcerating a person in prison for life
 - f. Other: _____

3. If researchers found, and were completely certain, that the using the death penalty as a punishment for murderers did not deter other criminals from committing similar severe crimes, would you still favor using the punishment?
 - a. Yes, I would still support the death penalty
 - b. No, I would no longer support the death penalty

Skip to question 6

4. If you chose "unsure" for question 1, please describe, to the best of your ability, why you chose this option.

Skip to question 6

5. If you chose "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove," think about your reasoning behind your opposition of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder. Compare your reasoning with the options from the list below and choose the option that best describes your *top rationale* for your opposition of the death penalty. If none of the options matches your reasoning, select "other" and give a brief description of your rationale.
- The death penalty is immoral and/or goes against my religious convictions
 - The death penalty does not allow a convicted criminal the chance for rehabilitation
 - The death penalty is irreversible; an innocent person could be executed
 - The death penalty is unfairly dispensed to minorities and the impoverished
 - The death penalty continues the cycle of violence
 - The death penalty is more costly than incarcerating a person in prison for life
 - Other: _____
-
-

6. Generally speaking, how committed are you to your stance on the death penalty? Assign a numerical value to signify your level of commitment, with lower numbers meaning **strongly committed** and higher numbers meaning **strongly uncommitted**.

0 _____ 100
Strongly Uncommitted Strongly Committed

7. When considering your stance on the death penalty, how much did you think about and explore opposing stances on the death penalty before reaching your decision? Assign a numerical value to signify the level you thought about, researched, and/or explored opposing stances on the death penalty prior to reaching your own decision. Lower values signify **active exploration** of alternative stances and higher values signify **no exploration** of alternative stances.

0 _____ 100
No Exploration Active Exploration

8. Generally speaking, do you approve or disapprove of the death penalty *for persons convicted of serious crimes besides murder* (e.g., rape)?
- Approve
 - Disapprove
 - Unsure
9. Generally speaking, do you believe that criminals are treated too harshly, not harshly enough, or just right in the criminal justice system?
- Not Harshly Enough
 - Just Right
 - Too Harshly

Conservatism-Liberalism Scale

1. People who are always trying to reform things are usually:
 - a. People who really care about other people
 - b. Busybodies who do more harm than good
 - c. Neither/undecided
2. Replacing traditional policies with new ones that seem attractive but have not been tested by experience is:
 - a. Often necessary for progress
 - b. Usually shortsighted and dangerous
 - c. Neither/undecided
3. Trying to make sweeping reforms in a society as complicated as ours is usually:
 - a. Worth trying, despite the risks
 - b. Much too risky
 - c. Neither/undecided
4. If you had to choose, whom would you trust to solve the country's problems:
 - a. "Thinking" people who have lots of ideas
 - b. "Practical" people who know how to run things
 - c. Neither/undecided
5. Can you depend on a man more if he owns property than if he doesn't?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 - c. Neither/undecided
6. Efforts to make everyone as equal as possible should be:
 - a. Increased
 - b. Decreased
 - c. Neither/undecided
7. All groups can live in harmony in this country:
 - a. Only if big changes are made in the system
 - b. Without changing the system very much
 - c. Neither/undecided
8. Which of these opinions do you think is more correct?
 - a. All people would be about the same if they were treated equally
 - b. Like some fine race horses, some classes of people are just naturally better than others
 - c. Neither/undecided
9. In making changes in our society or government, it's usually better to be guided by:
 - a. A plan that tries out new ideas
 - b. The practical experiences of the past
 - c. Neither/undecided
10. The best way to improve our society is:
 - a. To follow an overall program or theory
 - b. To allow changes to develop naturally by themselves
 - c. Neither/undecided
11. Most crime is caused by:

- a. Poverty and social injustice
 - b. The bad character of criminals
 - c. Neither/undecided
12. Laws and institutions which have existed for a long time:
- a. Are often too old-fashioned to be useful
 - b. Usually have much wisdom in them
 - c. Neither/undecided
13. Public ownership of large industry would be:
- a. A good idea
 - b. A bad idea
 - c. Neither/undecided
14. The way property is used should mainly be decided:
- a. By the community, since the earth belongs to everyone
 - b. By the individuals who own it
 - c. Neither/undecided
15. When it comes to property:
- a. We could easily wipe it out if we really tried
 - b. Some people will remain poor no matter what we do for them
 - c. Neither/undecided
16. The profit system:
- a. Brings out the worst in human nature
 - b. Teaches people the value of hard work and success
 - c. Neither/undecided
17. A person's wage should depend on:
- a. How much he needs to live decently
 - b. The importance of his job
 - c. Neither/undecided
18. Private ownership of property:
- a. Has often done more harm than good
 - b. Is as important to a good society as freedom
 - c. Neither/undecided
19. Working people in this country:
- a. Do not get a fair share of what they produce
 - b. Usually earn about what they deserve
 - c. Neither/undecided
20. Providing medical care for everyone at public expense would:
- a. Greatly improve the health of the nation
 - b. Reduce the general quality of medical care
 - c. Neither/undecided
21. If some people can't afford good housing:
- a. The government should provide it
 - b. They should work harder and save, until they can afford it
 - c. Neither/undecided
22. Money spent by the government to relieve poverty is:
- a. A worthwhile investment
 - b. Mostly a waste

- c. Neither/undecided
- 23. Spending tax money to provide a college education for those who can't afford it is:
 - a. A good idea
 - b. A bad idea
 - c. Neither/undecided
- 24. In the matter of jobs and standards of living, the government should:
 - a. See to it that everyone has a job and a decent standard of living
 - b. Let each person get ahead on his own
 - c. Neither/undecided
- 25. Who should bear the main responsibility for taking care of our senior citizens?
 - a. The community
 - b. The elderly themselves and their families
 - c. Neither/undecided
- 26. Which of these comes closer to your own opinion?
 - a. No American family should be allowed to live in poverty, even if they don't work
 - b. Any person who is able to work should not be allowed to receive welfare
 - c. Neither/undecided

Attitudes toward the Death Penalty Scale

Scale Items and Directions: This questionnaire contains a set of attitude statements. There are no right or wrong answers: we are interested in your opinions. Please read each statement carefully and then circle the response that reflects your reaction.

SA = strongly agree, A = agree, U = undecided,

D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

1. A judge should have the right to sentence a defendant to death, even if the jury has recommended life in prison.
SA A U D SD
2. People on death row are permitted to appeal their sentence too often.
SA A U D SD
3. If there is any doubt about a defendant's guilt, he or she should not be executed.
SA A U D SD
4. If a defendant on death row wants a DNA test of evidence, the state should automatically grant it.
SA A U D SD
5. People remain on death row too long.
SA A U D SD
6. It is wrong to sentence a mentally retarded person to death.
SA A U D SD
7. Children over 14 years should be able to receive a death sentence if they commit murder.
SA A U D SD
8. Those sentenced to life imprisonment often get out on parole.
SA A U D SD
9. Those who spend life in prison have too many luxuries (for example, TV, exercise equipment, etc.).
SA A U D SD
10. Severe actions deserve equally severe punishments.
SA A U D SD
11. The government does not have the right to sentence people to death.
SA A U D SD
12. Men and women should be treated equally when the death sentence is considered.
SA A U D SD
13. I am opposed to the execution of women who are pregnant.
SA A U D SD

14. It is worse to get a sentence of life in prison without parole than to get the death penalty.

SA A U D SD

15. No civilized society permits capital punishment.

SA A U D SD

16. It is necessary to permit the death penalty in order to reduce the murder rate.

SA A U D SD

17. The possibility of being executed serves as a deterrent against committing violent crimes.

SA A U D SD

18. Laws that permit the death penalty devalue the worth of every human life.

SA A U D SD

19. The death penalty is acceptable as a last resort.

SA A U D SD

20. A vote for the death penalty in some cases may be due to discrimination against a defendant who is a minority.

SA A U D SD

21. Laws permitting the death penalty use violence to punish violence.

SA A U D SD

22. The only way to control some potential crime is to enforce the death penalty.

SA A U D SD

23. If a woman committed a crime along with a man, and he is sentenced to death, she should be too.

SA A U D SD

The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale

This survey is part of an investigation of general public opinion concerning a variety of social issues. You will probably find that you *agree* with some of the statements and *disagree* with others, to varying extents. Please indicate your reaction to each of the statements by marking your opinion to the left of each statement, according to the following scale:

Mark a -4 if you *very strongly disagree* with the statement
 -3 if you *strongly disagree* with the statement
 -2 if you *moderately disagree* with the statement
 -1 if you *slightly disagree* with the statement

Mark a +1 if you *slightly agree* with the statement
 +2 if you *moderately agree* with the statement
 +3 if you *strongly agree* with the statement
 +4 if you *very strongly agree* with the statement

If you feel exactly and precisely *neutral* about a statement, mark a "0" next to it.

You may find that you sometimes have different reactions to different parts of a statement. For example, you might very strongly disagree ("-4") with one idea in a statement, but slightly agree ("+1") with another idea in the same item. When this happens, please combine your reactions, and write down how you feel on balance (a "-3" in this case).

1. God has given humanity a complete, unfailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed.
2. No single book of religious teachings contains all the intrinsic, fundamental truths about life.*
3. The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting against God.
4. It is more important to be a good person than to believe in God and the right religion.*
5. There is a particular set of religious teachings in this world that are so true, you can't go any "deeper" because they are the basic, bedrock message that God has given humanity.
6. When you get right down to it, there are basically only two kinds of people in the world: the Righteous, who will be rewarded by God; and the rest, who will not.

7. Scriptures may contain general truths, but they should NOT be considered completely, literally true from beginning to end.*
8. To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion.
9. "Satan" is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is *no such thing* as a diabolical "Prince of Darkness" who tempts us.*
10. Whenever science and sacred scripture conflict, *science* is probably right.*
11. The fundamentals of God's religion should never be tampered with, or compromised with others' beliefs.
12. *All* of the religions in the world have flaws and wrong teachings. There is *no* perfectly true, right religion.*

Note: * = con-trait item, for which the -4 to +4 scoring key is r

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